

A Museum Talk With

DON GRIFFITH

THE GRIFFITH FAMILY IN ESTES PARK

January 20, 1977

Don Griffith was interviewed on January 20, 1977, at the Estes Park Area Historical Museum. Dave Hieb conducted the program.

The tape is on file at the Estes Park Public Library and may be checked out. The reader should keep in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken, rather than the written word.

The Estes Park oral history project is jointly sponsored by the Estes Park Area Historical Museum and the Estes Park Public Library.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Griffith family background in the East and Middle West.....	1-2
Move to Colorado in 1888.....	2-3
The Albin Griffith homestead in Estes Park.....	3-4
Life in Estes Park 1888-1900.....	4-7
Lumbering in the Bierstadt Lake region before 1890.....	7-8
Fire in 1900.....	8
Beginning of the Griffith Lumber Yard.....	8-10
The Bierstadt Lake Mill.....	10-11
Louise Jesser Griffith.....	11-12
Sawmill fire and reconstruction.....	12
Lumbering in Hidden Valley.....	12-13
Start of the retail lumber yard in 1909.....	13-14
Big snow of 1913.....	14-15
Sketches of family members.....	15-17
Albin Griffith, approved preacher of the gospel.....	17
Selling off of the original homestead.....	17
Tribute to parents and environment.....	18
Photographs from the family album.....	18
Leasing of the lumber yard to Everitt.....	19
Healthful climate of the Loveland area.....	19

Museum Talk: Don Griffith (DG)  
Program Chairman: Dave Hieb (DH)  
Date: January 20, 1977  
Location: Estes Park Area Historical Museum

DH This recording is being made at the regular meeting of the Estes Park Area Historical Museum on January 20, 1977. It will feature a narrative by Mr. Donald Griffith regarding the Griffith family in Estes Park.

DG This is going to be just an informal thing, and I should like the privilege of referring to notes. It takes the pressure off a poor memory. You know what I mean! I'd like you to know that we've got a couple of people here in the audience tonight that are just as well qualified to give some things here as I, and probably would be a little better! Esther Fenton sitting there and Mike Griffith back there, who are a part of the family, too, would make a good program sometime, filling in on the other side of this story. What I can offer you is only a part of the story.

I'd like to start by saying that I think the circumstances of the Griffith family moving to Estes Park were somewhat pre-determined by happenings in Pennsylvania. In the first place, my grandfather, Albin Griffith, had a twin, and they were born in Newton, Illinois, February 23, 1858. He was married to Margaret Grim, who was born, as nearly as I can find out, in Cumberland County, Illinois, on May 27, 1858, which is a place very close to Greenup, where my grandfather was born. Now Mary Grim's father was also a minister. He moved there from Pennsylvania, and my grandmother, her mother, moved from Pennsylvania. Her name was Goldsmith, and we can trace her back to Franklin County, Pennsylvania, in the year of 1814. So, going back that far, I haven't been able to find any horse-thieves or anything like that, so we have to think that things were pretty much on the up-and-up!

The Reverend Albin Griffith and Mary Grim were married in 1881, and as nearly as I can find out, also in the vicinity of Greenup. They had five children: my father Dan Griffith, who was born in Greenup, Illinois, in 1882; John Griffith, whose birthplace I cannot trace exactly, but I would guess it to be Greenup or Adeleville, Illinois, in 1884; Oma Griffith, who was born in Mt. Carmel, Illinois, in 1886; then after they moved to Colorado, Nellie Griffith and Mary Lois Griffith, who were born in Hygiene, Colorado--Nellie in 1894 and Aunt Lois, I think, in 1897, although there is a conflict of dates between what I have and what is in several books that might be around in the library.

Greenup, Illinois, is rather close to the Wabash River. As I remember Father talking about it, it was within walking distance. The Wabash River separates part of Indiana from Illinois. Dad quite often would say that he learned to swim in the Wabash River by floating on Granddad Griffith's stomach while he was

in the water.' By inadvertently being pitched off, he was naturally inclined to learn to swim rather rapidly. He said he could remember his brother John **floating on his father's** stomach while they were in the Wabash River. But to set the stage here, the Wabash River is in a low farming area of that particular community. I've never been back there, and I sometime want to go back. Anyway, as the youngsters were beginning to toddle around, they were sick a lot during the summer, and we know now that they had malaria. They called it summer fever. Motivated by illness in the family, since Grandmother Griffith as well as my father and Uncle John and Aunt Oma were sick a great deal of the summer, they decided that this place was not for them. Perhaps there was a better place to live, and they had done quite a bit of reading about Colorado. I guess that it was plain luck that they said, "O.K., we're going to head out.

My dad, of course, was quite young at the time, and he did not have too good a memory of what occurred, but one of the things that he could remember vividly was crossing Kansas by train. He said that when they left Illinois, there was a heavy deluge of rain, and it had been raining for a week or more. As they started across Kansas, the train went slower and slower until you'd think you were at a walking pace, probably 10 or 15 miles an hour. This was because a great deal of the tracks was inundated with water, and he said at one place as they were coming across the western portion of Kansas, the train ultimately had to stop because the water got so deep that it would put out the fire in the firebox. When the locomotive ran out of steam, they stopped. He said that he can't remember exactly how long they may have been there--I would suppose only a matter of hours--but anyway, the people aboard the train assisted the crew in tearing down fence posts that were adjacent to the track to start a fire again in the boiler and to proceed slowly on their way to Denver.

Anyway, they arrived in Loveland, and although I can't pinpoint the year, it would have to have been in 1888 or 1889. Now in one place it says one, and in another it says the other. I think circumstances are such that if I try to put things together, it would be better to say 1888 because Dad often said that he made his first trip to Estes Park in 1889, and this would have been the year following their arrival in Loveland in August, 1888.

Let's back up just a little bit. My grandfather Griffith was an ordained United Brethren minister. I have a copy I would assume is some kind of church document that gave him the right to minister the gospel in the United Brethren Church. The year is dated 1878, which means he was twenty years old approximately. Now, I know nothing particularly of his schooling back of that. I just have to assume that it was enough to give him credentials to minister the gospel.

Upon arriving in Loveland, he was put to work rather in a hurry as a minister in the United Brethren Church in Loveland. The

documents I have also show that he had around 1890 and up through nearly 1900 served in this same capacity even while he was up here. Anyway, he was with the Loveland United Brethren Church for a number of years, and then, there is some evidence to show that he switched from the United Brethren Church to the Baptist Church. Then, later, he ministered to those churches not only in Loveland, but also in Berthoud and Hygiene.

Let me read some notes that I have taken from Dad when he was getting along in years. It is interesting that we went over these things, and he somewhat validated that what I've got written down is reasonably within circumstances. The years I've got here are 1888, 1889, and 1890. The first trip of the Albin Griffith family to Estes Park region was undertaken with a borrowed wagon with cover and one borrowed horse to match the one owned by Albin. The trip was slow and laborious, taking the entire day. The route at that time was straight west from First Street in Loveland, over Bald Mountain, then along Pole Mountain, and down through part of the present Crocker Ranch. Now, if you want to determine where the present Crocker Ranch is, go down to where the new processing plant of the Upper Thompson Sanitation District is and look right straight down that valley there toward the east. This is where they came down out of the hay meadow and stuff in there.

Anyway, upon getting here to Estes Park, the family camped at a spring which is located near the southeast corner of the original Albin Griffith homestead. If you were to go up the Mary's Lake Road to where Upper Broadview turns to the right, you'd find that the camp where they stopped would be right south of where the road takes off to the west. It would be a quarter of a mile south of where Upper Broadview is. I'll tell you why they camped at this particular location. The homestead of 160 acres here came about after Albin had talked to Mr. Ferguson, an adjoining landowner, who informed Albin that his horses were on government ground and that it was open to homesteading. After much family discussion, in 1890, they decided that the papers should be drawn up according to the Homestead Act. The part they wanted to homestead at that time did not lay in the pattern that it is now. If you were to start there at Upper Broadview, you would be  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile and a mile wide going to the west and then a  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile to the south, so the homestead lay in kind of an inverted L shape at that time when the original papers were drawn up; however, after the papers were drawn up, there was some swapping around that took place. Instead of the one forty-acres being to the south, they had four consecutive forty acres running from east to west. So, starting there at the corner, you would end up at the west portion, and that's up by Valhalla Cottages. It would be the mile east to west and  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile running south. That was the original 160 acres. The papers were completed upon the establishment of a residence which was located on the east forty adjacent to a spring previously mentioned. The location of this first residence is still marked by a scattering of stone where their fireplace was built. I don't know whether I could pinpoint the spot now, but I could come pretty close to it, That particular

ground now belongs to my cousin Esther, and she has some homes over there. It is still retained within part of the family. Albin moved his family up here in 1890, and the first residence was a log house near the spring on that east forty.

He kept his pastorship at Loveland, and later at Berthoud and Hygiene, where he spent much of his time, leaving the family up here, except for a few months in the winter where a rather sparse education was provided for the kids. He traveled to his church duties down on Saturday, took care of his church duties on Sunday or whatever was necessary, and returned sometime early in the week. He did this for years and years, and then we think about commuting! Big deal! I don't know how they took it, really!

As I look back, I think probably that those people at that time just simply lived by their bootstraps. I know good and well from what Dad said and others in the family that there were scarcely meals upon the table, and oftentimes there was work swapped for feed for the horses. Survival of the fittest, I guess is what you'd call it! One of the things that Dad mentioned that happened and that he saw himself on one of the first trips up to Estes Park were some of the Indian remnants--and, Mrs. Tallant, this is kind of directed toward you, too. Upon arriving in what is now Estes Park, he saw growing profusely a large grove of aspen along the south bank of the Big Thompson River above stream where it now joins the Fall River. Near the midpoint of this grove stood the skeletal remains of an earlier Indian teepee. All that remained was the weathered poles and the customary shape of a cone. Many years had passed since it had been covered, and all evidence of habitation had been reduced to nothing by action of the snow, rain, and the usual vicissitudes of the weather rent this thing pretty much apart. This teepee, as my dad described it, stood very near the present dwelling of Bill Huebner. Now, Bill is gone, but we all know pretty well where he lived.

Voice I think it was up farther where the Clatworthy property is.

DG It would have had to be close in there. That's right!

DH We have a picture of it that Clatworthy took, and according to his children, it was on their property.

DG It still validates the fact that right in that area we did have remnants of that, and I think it's interesting that more than one person is alive to record it. I'm pleased to be a part of that.

In later years in the excavating of a ditch located up where Stead's Ranch was, there were unearthed many Indian artifacts in the form of stone grinding implements. Some of these I think are in the possession of Bob Cheney and some of the people that work up there. It would be interesting to have him come down sometime and chat with you about that. They were found under eight to twelve inches of soil.

I asked my dad one time, "Do you remember the people who were in Estes Park when you first came here?" He said, "Well, I don't know, but I'd like to try to think about some of them." So I tried to write them down. I've got this dated 1888; I won't try to validate that it's accurate. I'm going by word of mouth. He said that the present Crocker Ranch was occupied by John Stiverson, but the Dunraven cabins were built by John Cleeve over on Fish Creek. So was the old English Hotel constructed by John Cleeve over on Fish Creek. Of course, it burned down many years ago. The MacGregor property we all know; the Mac Gregor Ranch was there when he came. So were the McCreerys out on Devil's Gulch. Some people by the name of Johnson were on the present McGraw Ranch. Shep Husted came into the community about the same time as my father, as near as he could remember. The John Cleve residence was on what is presently Main Street, fairly close to the Hupp Hotel. The schoolhouse was up several buildings from where the Estes Park Bank now stands. He told me at the time it was where the Clatworthy studio used to be, and I know where it was. There was a Hubbell Stage and Freight, a stable close to the Estes Park Garage. Now the Estes Park Garage was still there when I wrote this down, up where the Chevron station is across from the Community Church between there and the river. The Jameses were on the Fall River, and they had ground that went from Elkhorn Lodge practically to the fish hatchery. In the ensuing years this land has been subdivided to some extent. The Lamb family were at the present Wind River Ranch, Carlyle Lamb was starting Long's Peak Inn, the Fergusons were south of Mary's Lake--Mrs. Charlie Reed, Sr., was the daughter of the Fergusons, I believe--the Hupps were in the Beaver Meadows, the Elys on the Beaver Meadows, Spragues in Moraine Park at what was the site of the Steads' Ranch, and I guess that's all I've got on that little jewel!

Let's look at the remembrance he had of 1891 or 1892. He couldn't exactly place it. The winter had been somewhat severe, in all probability made more severe by the only shelter available. This was a single sixteen by twenty-four foot room placed on rocks and located fairly near the river in the vicinity of what is now the Everitt Lumber Yard. If you go to the Everitt Lumber Yard and proceed into the entrance of it and then over to the right about a hundred yards, then about another fifty yards toward the river, you would be where this house was. Remember, it was 16'X24' and had the whole family in it! The single blue spruce was planted there in the front yard, and in ensuing years would be gone. This particular building is now a part of the office of the lumber company, believe it or not! I can pinpoint it for you. It is a part of the back section of the office, and there is a little change of floor level there. When you go out there and about stumble, you are going into it!

Anyway, the winter seemed well gone in early May with the usual spring work well along, such as getting gardens in, cleaning up, and so forth. Then, on Memorial Day of this year, they awoke to have thirty inches of wet snow lying just as far as an eye

could see. The ponderous weight of the snow had broken down trees, and everything green was simply prostrate. This storm plus the normal melting of the higher terrain up near timberline raised the Big Thompson River to a smashing good level, as he put it. The storm dissipated rather soon, and a normal summer proceeded. He goes on to say here that what seemed to be normal winters lasted through the mid-1920's with more snow than we now realize, and it stayed on later. Snow stayed on with a much steadier appearance, with the sight of the snow fogged by wind and more snow. And we, of course, know what that is. Considerable time was spent on snowshoes at elevations above that of Moraine Park, and there was a very definite line of intensity of winter between the bottom and the top of the hill leading into Moraine Park. Folks who are new here should know that the entrance road did go right up the Thompson River into Moraine Park, not the Beaver Meadows Entrance you know now.

I think these early people, including my folks and grandfather and a bunch, really had a time of it financially. Let me share with you a couple of items here. Some of the money earned by my father and my Uncle John was by fishing and selling the fish. Most of the fishing was done with makeshift tackle and generally from the home downstream to the present bridge going across to the south at Beaver Point, a distance of approximately a mile. They were generally able to catch between eight and ten pounds of native cutthroat trout. These were immediately cleaned and then carried on foot over to the old English Hotel where they were sold for thirty cents a pound, bringing as much as a day's wages for a man working at the time. I asked Dad, "How did you spend a good deal of your early years?" The incessant answer I got was "We worked! We had to work!" That's all they knew--work, work, work! There was always land to clear, something to be fixed, or the wagon was broken. Something always was having to be done; it was work, work, work!

The native trout were the only species in the river at this time when they were fishing and selling them. They were all fleshy by nature and plentiful. The river was free of pollution and had many natural barriers such as beaver dams and log drifts that formed a natural feeding grounds. Heavens, yes, I can remember drinking out of the creek, and I didn't get sick from it! Dad said that one time when he caught his first rainbow trout and brought it home, cleaned it and put it in with the others, his mother looked at it and said, "This fish is sick! We won't have it!" She threw it out! They didn't know what a rainbow trout was; they'd had native trout all of the time up until then.

Dad had an easygoing philosophy of live and let live, and a little thing he has here was interesting. He said that the philosophy of the National Park System is farfetched. The idea of not wanting any foreign fish placed in the waters of the National Park now is preposterous. Most of the high lakes in the National Park were stocked at the turn of the century before with species of rainbow, brook trout and others. The



idea of not placing foreign trout in these waters seems rather misplaced from these incidents rather than precluded in the establishment of Rocky Mountain National Park. I think maybe he had a point, but at the same time I'm glad to see the National Park bringing back and trying to build up this stock of native trout. I think it's great. I'd like to see them stop fishing in the National Park just as they have stopped hunting. I'd like to be able to look down and see trout in the creek.

Other little sources of income mostly during the years from 1890 to 1900 came from building fencing lines and clearing ground--these grounds being cleared of aspen and narrow-leaved cottonwood and, of course, the usual willow, mountain birch, and yellow alder that's along close by there--and in making good hay meadows. Those meadows are still here, and we use them. They also had some income derived from the pasturing of horses during summer camping by people and income from selling milk. My granddad had to have cows and horses, I assure you. He wouldn't take care of them all the time, but he had to have them. Anyway, there was some income from the selling of milk and wood that was entirely cut by hand. They'd go in there with a double-bit ax weighing about four pounds, and they'd have a long two-man saw that was about five feet long. You'd put your back to the job, and you'd get it done! Dad often spoke of going from where they were with a wagon over to the south slope of Deer Mountain and coming back with two or three wagonloads of pitch wood during the day, and then hauling it over to such places as the old English Hotel or other places that needed wood for their fireplaces. The total supply up here was very limited, so you took care of your tools. If you lost your ax, you were without something with which to build a fire!

I think that now I'd like to go into a little bit of the history of how this lumber business developed and what preceded it. Dad said that before 1890--he wouldn't make a statement of the time because it preceded his arrival--two people by the name of Beckwith and Hill cut the first timber and sawed it into lumber near the Bierstadt region. Now, this would be up at Bierstadt Lake on the slope coming up to it from Mill Creek. The mill was located on Mill Creek at the first rapids above Hallowell Park. The timber cut was mainly in the proximity of the old Mill Creek Ranger Station where a tremendous growth of Englemann spruce was in a swamplike basin. Some of their logging was done with oxen, and most of the lumber was hauled to the valley for home or early business construction. All of this activity predated even the establishment of the United States Forest Service. I found, when my brother and I were up fishing on Mill Creek, just where you start up that rapids, maybe ten or fifteen feet from the river, a shoe from an animal that we did not recognize as a horseshoe. We stuck it into the fish basket; and when we got back home, we asked my father what it was. He said, "That's off a yoke of oxen. An oxen has a split hoof, whereas a horse doesn't." Well, we asked what the oxen were doing up there, and he related what had been given to him.

This Beckwith and Hill had their first timber cutting up there. Two of the early stage and freight drivers were Grif Smith and Claude Matthews who drove for a fellow named Cantwell. They hauled mainly from Lyons to some place around Denver, and Smith at one time told of hauling brick from Denver for the old English Hotel, and the brick were worn one-third their thickness from the motion of the wagon! Dad couldn't remember all the names that were involved, but one of the names he could remember very definitely was B. D. Sandborn, who was the father of Carl Sandborn. Up around Bierstadt Lake, B.D. Sandborn and others changed the water from Mill Creek, dug a ditch that is still carrying water, by the way, into Bierstadt Lake, which originally had no headwaters or inlet. They transferred water by digging a ditch on the western drainage of Flattop Mountain over to Fern Creek drainage. It started on the Western Slope and spilled water into Odessa Lake and on hence into the Big Thompson River. This ditch was estimated to be approximately a foot deep and a couple of feet wide, and as nearly as Dad could remember, was about a mile and a half to two miles in length. Much of this ditch, no doubt, was dug through some very difficult terrain, where many rocks and impediments were finally overcome. Bierstadt Lake before the ditch was dug was the same level as it is at present. The ditch just gave the lake some running water. I'd recommend that you people who have not been to Bierstadt Lake get some hiking shoes and go up there. It's not a very long walk. It's a very beautiful lake; to me it's one of the most beautiful up there. There is a prodigious growth of yellow pond lilies, and the lake is surrounded by vast stands of Englemann spruce and lodgepole pine.

Dad reminded me with a little chuckle that with the change in water course, B. D. Sandborn was going to erect a power unit down at Hallowell Park where it starts up Mill Creek. He often chuckled that it sure had a helluva lot of pressure!

I think that all of you who have been up to Bear Lake have noticed the damage that occurred up there from a fire about 1900. Dad witnessed this fire and often spoke about it. I'll just go over what he had here. Of course, this account is minimal. Dad could not say definitely the cause of this large fire that started about in August of 1900. Tremendous bursts of flame and smoke burned the area over in a period of perhaps two months, sometimes practically obliterating the sun. The fire crept about with no control being undertaken, would burn in an area and then lie rather dormant, only to ignite again fresh just to burn furiously in different places. This pattern would proceed from place to place. The evidence of the fire is still very clear in the region, and the fire was finally extinguished by natural barriers. Burned regions where there was no more immediately flammable material available and where a heavy rain had covered the particular area later on, simply died out. He said that many early visitors and campers left the region fearing that the heavy wind would spread the fire down in the lower areas and cause disastrous results to their camping equipment.

I'll try to get back now to tying this story a little closer

together with what originated the Griffith Lumber Yard over a period of time. The first sawmill on the Albin Griffith property was one hired to cut lumber from the homestead, the agreement being that the owner take half and the mill operator take half. Two fellows by the name of Hallwell and Meade hauled up a much dilapidated sawmill that was powered by an old steam traction engine that had to be pulled by a team of horses because the traction gears which moved the machine on its own power were stripped. The mill was set up just south and east of the present planer mill. Now, I wrote this account some years back so that I'll have to describe to you where this planer mill was. You go into Everitt Lumber Yard, proceed through the fenced part of it to the last building to your left, and go in forward. So the first millsite that they had was within one hundred feet of that, maybe one hundred fifty. Some lumber was cut here, but it did not prove to be a very profitable enterprise. The engine powering this mill was approximately an eight by ten bore and stroke with an RPM probably of 150 to 200, very much underpowered. As he said at the time, it didn't amount to much, but he could remember it very easily. My grandfather bought his first sawmill and used a somewhat dilapidated Curtis, #5. The mill had a cutoff saw for wood, and a slab disposal system which was powered by a 6x10 stationary engine that had a huge five foot flywheel on it and a stationary boiler. Now a stationary boiler, gang, is a long, cylindrical object probably about four feet in diameter and maybe twelve to sixteen feet long. It is built up under this with brick clear from the front to the back and has a firebox below with a baffle in the middle of it so that a fire under there flows down the length underneath the boiler and then comes back up and comes through from back to front in the flues to gain additional heat and then hence up the stack. So when they move one of these things in, you've got quite a job to build it up again. Anyway, this is the first one that he had there. The carriage, which is the part on which the log goes, that goes back and forth between the saw, was a rack and pinion drive and had a couple of headblocks on it that were pretty well beat up. The sawdust disposal was kind of unusual; sawdust was taken out by hand and on a cart.

The first place they set up this mill was on what used to be the Springer property. As you go up the Tunnel Road to where the rock cut is, there's a road that takes off to your left through a big grove of blue spruce--that's the Springer property. It's on Wind River, and that's where their first millsite was. They cut lumber there somewhat on the same basis that they had it cut on their own place; owner take half, and operator take half. They moved next from there up not to far from where the Brinwood Hotel was, over to the north and east of that. The logs from that region were cut, skidded, and sawed by my father, Uncle John, and my grandfather. The lumber was cut on a strictly labor basis with landowner keeping all. In other words, he paid for the cutting of it on a time and labor basis.

Many of the buildings in that vicinity were built with the material from this operation with the exception of flooring and siding which

were hauled in from outside, probably from the train out of Lyons. The property at that time where they had the mill belonged to Harris Welcome, who Dad said is buried somewhere up there. From there, this same mill was moved to the present site where the Brinwood Hotel used to be where a big cutting was made. The lumber was cut here and used as a part of the hotel and the barn. The owners were the Fergusons, a fact which I mentioned before. Roger? He could fill this in. I have names here: Horace Ferguson and son Jim Ferguson and other Fergusons. Then, he quotes Mrs. Charlie Reed, Sr.

We'll go from there to the Bierstadt Lake Mill setting. I have to set the stage for this. F. O. Stanley was up here to regain his health, and he had obtained quite a bit of property. He was in the mind of building a large hotel, and he did. Anyway, he needed material, and this is how the Bierstadt mill setting came into being. The road to the millsite at Bierstadt Lake terminated at that time at the ranger station, which is just above the rapid water above Hallowell Park, where in 1900 Abner Sprague had a water-powered sawmill that cut a small amount of lumber just near where the ranger station was at that time. Sprague had laid a six-inch water pipe from the top of the flat down to his millsite and really had terrific water pressure but a somewhat erratic mill. Anyway, my grandfather and his crew with my father and Uncle John built the road from where the Mill Creek Ranger Station is up to Bierstadt Lake. They moved the stationary boiler and the engine I described earlier up to that site on wagons and skids and whatever they could manipulate to get it up! The machinery was transported entirely by horse and wagon, requiring some unusual devices and plenty of hard work. The mill, after it was erected up there, was covered for protection from the weather, and there were other buildings including, I believe, four small houses where other men were boarded and roomed, and then there were two small barns for the horses.

The mill itself was the same one that they had had down at the places I've mentioned before, kind of a wornout rig. The sawdust conveyor was a belt; and after a pile grew in size, it had to be moved day by day with a big sled built for that particular purpose. So you can see that when the sawdust came out of the mill and there was no place to put it, it had to be moved by hand from there on out rather than by mechanical means. The crew up there consisted of three cutters and loggers, three millmen, and three men with horses for transporting the lumber to Estes Park where, at the present location of Estes Park Lumber up into Main Street where it was at that time, Dr. James had a planer. This rough lumber was surfaced there and then taken to the site where the Stanley Hotel was being built.

The cutting at Bierstadt Lake was in the spring and summers largely of 1907 and 1908. Dad estimated that they cut between 600,000 and 750,000 board feet of lumber up there. I'd like to mention right here that the lumber they cut up there was not green tree stands. You've got to remember that the whole area

in there was devastated by the fire in 1900, and the trees that they were allowed to cut by the Forest Service were those that were still standing and had been killed by the fire. Dad often spoke about the operation of that mill making you as black as tar by the time the day was through from handling those logs which were pretty well charred.

My grandfather provided food and lodging for this crew of about nine men. Most of the foodstuff was hauled back up there after they had delivered lumber down here into town, and I would assume that the purchase of supplies was probably through Sam Service's store.

A little sidelight here--there were great amounts of what my dad called huckleberries--I think they're actually blueberries--but anyway he said that they grew in very vast quantities in an area up where this fire was. In one day four people picked seventeen gallons of them, and they were as big as peas! You just can't have a better pie than one made from those.

In 1909 they completed the cutting of lumber that went into the Stanley Hotel. They moved the sawmill down from the Bierstadt Lake region to where the Everitt Lumber Company now is. This stationary mill that they had there was then enlarged with a single-surface planer that Dad, Grandfather, and Uncle John purchased from Shep Husted. Now, Shep was over here on kind of the top of Devil's Gulch, and he had done a lot of cutting there, by the way. Anyway, the first logs that were hauled into this new mill setting were hauled from the area that belonged to Mrs. McPherson, from the present Moraine Park Museum area. Then, the cutting was from there north over to the Beaver Creek drainage. There was a large stand of ~~Bnderosa~~ ponderosa pine in there, and it produced some very good lumber. A good part of the house where Esther now lives was built with the lumber that was cut at that particular site.

Now, I'd like to take you back and bring my mother into the scene because she, too, came into the story rather early. Mother was born in 1891 in Denison, Texas, shortly after her parents had immigrated from Germany to the United States. She lived in Denison, Texas, for probably three years, and then my grandfather Jesser, who was trying to be a farmer and was a rather restless fellow, decided that Texas was no place for him. So he moved to a little town near Cedar Rapids, Nebraska, and he probably stayed in that area for several years on various rented farms. He got restless feet again and decided to go into the sheep ranching business in Pendleton, Oregon. He loaded the family--there were eight kids, I think, among whom Mother was probably the third from the oldest--and reached Pendleton, Oregon, to find that the people with whom he had been doing business were anything but trustworthy people! He got out there and didn't find what he had paid for. He didn't have his sheep or anything. They had his money! He had enough in his pocket to head back to Nebraska after maybe being in Pendleton for about six weeks.

He moved to about twenty miles from where they were before to a little town called Wolbach where he was a tenant on two or three farms until my mother was about seventeen years old. Then, they moved from there out near Boyd Lake at Loveland where my grandfather lived until about 1930 or 1931. You folks know what happened then--the banks ended up with the farms. My grandfather and grandmother moved on into Loveland where they didn't have a heck of a lot to eat. Be that as it may, we finally got my mother to Loveland!

Well, she was about seventeen years old or so at the time, and she found out that there might be some work up in Estes Park. So she came up here one way or another. She told me she first came up to Estes Park in the summer of 1908 when she cooked and kept house for Mrs. Beckfield. Their house was located on Main Street near the present National Park Hotel or Western Brands, right in that very close area. In the summer of 1909 she was with her parents near Loveland, the year of 1910 she was in Denver, and the summers of 1911, 1912, and 1913 she worked in the kitchen of the Stanley Hotel as well as being the cook and housekeeper for Mr. and Mrs. Lamborn, who were the managers of the Stanley Hotel at that time. She first got acquainted with my dad about 1912, and they were married in October of 1913. So that brings her into the family.

Well, now we've got all the devil breaking loose here because here's a dare that stands out in mother's mind. She had it down in one of her diaries--October 25, 1913. "At fifteen minutes of twelve the sawmill caught fire. Daddy Griffith had gone to Boulder in the morning, and this is an event for our first day of being alone." Mother and Dad had just been married a few days. She said the entire mill and a great deal of lumber were entirely gone. They fought the fire for many hours, and three carloads of people from town drove out when they could see the smoke and the trouble to assist in putting out the fire. But everything was just in utter ruin. In Mother's words: "The greatest fire ever witnessed! Pretty indeed to see the bright red blaze for those of no concern and to whom the loss meant nothing! Much worry and misery, but let's forget and go to work!"

In 1916 Dad said they bought a new Curtis mill, and it was erected on the same location as the one that burned in 1913. The boiler didn't seem to be damaged in any way as it was full of water from the previous fire when it burned, so they rebuilt the base of that. They bought a new engine, and anyway the stationary engine they had was rebuilt. They bought a new Fisher-Davis single-surface surfacer, and this made up pretty much the mill as I remember it as a kid.

Also at this time the additions to the Stanley Hotel were in progress with the timber being cut in Hidden Valley, carried by wagon down to the mill, cut up and hauled up to the Stanley from there. These trees were cut from the area located near where now the Hidden Valley Ski Lodge is erected. Two cutters were employed with five teams in the labor of hauling the timber to the mill.

I don't know whether any of you ever had the privilege of going into Hidden Valley before Trail Ridge Road went through there, but it was rather--well, you know what it was! Do you remember that very steep pitch that went through there? I'll have to describe this to you. The road into Hidden Valley had one very steep and dangerous section. One time one of the teamsters by the name of Tom Crosby attempted to jump from a load that he thought was out of control, and a wagon ran over him. The injury at the time appeared to be only a broken leg, but when they got back to give him help, he was dead! After that, the section was known as Deadman Hill.

Logging continued here during the summer until about Thanksgiving when operations had to cease because of the excessive difficulty with the snow and drifting on the roads.

Abner Sprague had the first sawmill in Hidden Valley. It was a rather small rig powered by a one-cylinder gasoline engine which had a probable horsepower rating about twelve. He cut for several years during summers, but did not really produce too much lumber. Most of the lumber cut there was used to build Stead's Hotel, which was in Moraine Park. At about this same time Walter Fulton and his father were also running a sawmill in this particular region; their lumber was taken and used in building parts of the original Stanley Hotel.

The fire that swept Hidden Valley probably in November--I can't verify the date--was caused by Joe Ryan, then the forest ranger, in trying to dispose of a huge sawdust pile. The piles of sawdust were ignited, and lots of them burned quite successfully until one of them got away and caught nearby timber afire. The fire could be seen from Estes Park where massive clouds of smoke boiled up from the inferno of the timber. This fire was fought by all available men and with favorable winds only burned for a few days.

Dad often said with regard to business that what they really started was a retail lumberyard in about 1909 when they started purchasing West Coast lumber. This would mean that probably the first things they brought in were fir sidings, fir floorings, mouldings, doors, windows, and these things that added to the native products that they were cutting. Of course, along with these came cement, building hardware, nails, glass, and gradually as they needed storage for these things, additions were built to the building. If you look at those buildings out there, you can't help seeing that here was one and then they added some more and some more. Pretty soon they had anything but a good building, but it's still standing there!

I remember, too, some of the conveyances that were used to move logs and lumber around. Those teams and wagons were used in my day, too, when I was a little kid. I remember the first truck I saw around here was a Model T. My first remembrance of it is that they were loading the critter with some long pieces of lumber when the first thing I knew it was tilted up, the front end of it elevated! I found out later that this was kind of a common occurrence.

But I can remember some other vehicles. The first three of them here had solid tires on them, and I mean solid tires--they were not pneumatics by any means! There was a ton and a half master truck, a two ton master truck, and a three and a half ton standard, which, by the way, is still sitting there in the back! They had a three and a half ton Packard truck that had been bought as a remnant of WWI from the National Park Service, as I remember. There were six Ford trucks over the years--most of them a ton and a half capacity--one Chevrolet and one Studebaker. To the best of my knowledge most of them were just about worn out when they were finally disposed of!

I can also remember three teams of horses, and I'll have to tell you that Granddad Griffith and the whole family liked their stock. Horses and cows were part of the family; chickens were all over the place. During part of the year there were also times when the hogpen had a few hogs in it. We had those set up for butchering in the fall of the year.

One of the things Dad often talked about was the terrific snow in 1913. One of the things I had to write down that he told me was how they got the road open. Let me read it to you. "Early in December gave every indication of a storm in the making. Stock was restless; the air was heavy, causing unrest even among the men who were working for us. In the morning snow started falling from a very quiet and heavy-laden sky. The snow fell hour after hour with unremitting beauty. Hardly any wind moved, and then when it did, it came in very, very gently from the north-northeast. This continued nearly steadily for two days and nights and then ceased for two days, leaving approximately three feet of snow on the level. The usual wind did not develop, and then the snow began again in the same quiet beautiful pattern, hour after hour again. And when the sky cleared in two, or a little more, days, there were a few more inches over six feet of snow from the one storm. Everything remained quiet after the storm with the usual southwest wind remaining as a calm." He goes on to say that much hard work was undertaken to dig from under this massive storm. Hay was very low for the stock, and after breaking one path into town, my dad and two others with horses went over to the MacGregor Ranch where they purchased baled hay, loading two bales per horse, and came home, to repeat about two days later. They were low on feed, and that was the only place they could get hay up here.

The town of Estes Park was rapidly running out of food, and my dad along with two other teams and one other wagon and thirty saddle horses--give or take thirty--started toward Lyons. Their method of breaking the road down was to drive the saddle horses in a circular motion such as this, around and around, ahead of the wagon to stomp down the snow. This procedure was slow so that the first day they reached the Ranchhouse, only a few miles east of town. Now, the Ranchhouse is down very close to where the school-houses are, right down in that bottom. The second day they proceeded as far as Blair's, which is now Meadowdale Ranch. The third day they got to Elephant Foot Curve, returning to Blair's that night. Now, Elephant Curve is just about where the road washed



out last summer going down 66. It's that curve off to the left there as you go down. The fourth day they made it clear to Lyons, being met on County Hill by men coming up from Lyons where they had about three and a half feet of snow. The return trip to Estes even over the road they had traversed before was very laborious and slow. Sleds were built and used for the rest of the winter with the people from Estes finally shoveling the remainder of snow in May to make travel for wagons and buggies. This storm caused extensive damage to buildings, one of these being the large assembly hall at the YMCA where the weight of the snow caved in the roof of the large building. Rather unexpected was the way the large animals, the deer and the elk, came through this heavy winter. They banded in large groups staying near willow and aspen groves where they browsed everything edible with very little loss of life. The smaller animals such as coyotes, bobcats, hares, and rabbits were less fortunate. It was several years before they apparently regained their former numbers.

For you people who are interested in the Griffith family, I'm going to make a few comments that may be appropriate. As I remember my Grandfather Griffith, there have been a lot of rumors that he had a church up here in Estes Park where he was a minister, but this is not a fact. He filled in frequently where the Community Church is now, and I can remember hearing him preach a number of times. He was rather a dynamic fellow. He had a beautiful, resonant baritone voice. He had good diction and a rather fluent vocabulary for a person of his time. I think that he gave a lot of work to the church. I'm sure he did. He worked hard while he was ministering in the church, but when he finally got a business going with his sons, he kind of gave up hard work and did not particularly care about it. With several things that I say, I don't mean to be disrespectful of him, but lots of times, if there was work to be done, he quickly disappeared. I don't blame him under the conditions! He was somewhat frugal, and perhaps just the least bit difficult when money was involved. I think I can understand that. They never had anything, and what he got a hold of, he liked to keep in his pocket-book. I can remember very often that if you'd go down to the lumber yard when he was head of it, you could go over to the cash register and find it empty because the money was in his billfold! It was hard to get it back into the cash register; he kind of liked it. He often had extreme difficulty meeting his payroll, and in the intervening years much of his original tract of land was sold in order to keep the business and family together. He retired from the ministry in about 1907. I have some papers here that I was rather surprised came into my hands shortly after he passed away in 1946. I never realized that he had been over to Pagosa Springs for a couple of years. I don't know whether he was over there steadily or intermittently, but there are papers here showing that he was a member of the Baptist Church and active in the Baptist Church in Pagosa Springs in 1905, 1906, and 1907. How stupid of me not to get acquainted better with my grandfather and get many things down. I feel bad about it, yet I can't do anything about it now.

Dad often mentioned that his father was rather an academic person and liked to work with the church tremendously. He worked hard wherever he worked with the church until he came up to Estes Park where he was not really affiliated with one. He did keep quite active in business until about 1917 when he lost his wife. Now Grandmother died down at my Aunt Oma's house. She was living west of Loveland at the time. I don't remember, and I can't find out much about Grandmother's death. It must have been somewhat unexpected. Anyway, this no doubt left him ~~not~~ quite the man he was prior to that. Dad often said that things changed. My Grandmother Griffith was a very patient, calm deliberate person, very gentle. I never knew her because she passed away when I was about six months old, but anyone who knew her said that she was a very, very wonderful person. Mother often said that my dad had inherited her sweet disposition, for which I am grateful, too. My dad was a wonderful person--there's just a whole story about him that could be told.

Uncle John--I'm not going into him because I think really that Esther, his daughter, and Mike back there could fill you in much better than I can because his story is another one that is just as interesting and as full as the one I've told. I remember that Uncle John was a hard worker. He was a robust man, maybe about five foot nine, weighing about 180 or 185 pounds, and worked like the dickens. He was very handy with his horses and was just a nice guy to be around.

My Aunt Oma was the next one down the line. She helped for many years while they were at Bierstadt. She did a lot of the cooking up there and this type of thing, and I think was a person who supported the whole early part of the business. She married a guy by the name of Robert Miller, who was down near Loveland, and they were on farms west. She and Bob sold their farm down in Masonville in 1946, and they retired up here to Estes. He died sometime in the mid-fifties, and my Aunt Oma lived alone for a few years. Then she moved in with my Aunt Lois, and they lived in the big house where Esther is now.

My Aunt Nellie I can't remember at all. She was an invalid, and Dad said as nearly as he could remember and from what his mother told him, she was a very normal girl until the age of two or three. Then, she had a severe case of what they thought was whooping cough, and she was an invalid from that time. She lived to be about twenty-four, so that I really can't tell too much about her. I wish I could.

A lot of credit should be given to my Aunt Lois. I think she sacrificed a lot of her life. After her mother died, my grandfather needed help. I think there was just a mutual concern there because she kept him and attended school. She went to Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, for a year. She also attended Colorado University in Boulder, and she finally graduated from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley. She was also a music student of John Roseborough. She taught music and art here in the local schools in the mid-1920's. In fact, I had her for a teacher!

And I'll have you know that regardless of what you hear these days about our having the only band that ever won anything, that's a mess of garbage because i played in an orchestra that won a great big pennant up there saying "First Orchestra Contest, 1928," or something like that! Anyway, I give her credit; she did a beautiful job. She taught music and art here for some years, and when she resigned her teaching position here to help with the lumber business, she undertook the bookkeeping along with caring for her father and the home. The lumber business had grown to the place where they needed more help with the bookkeeping, which was not one of my dad's long suits. When it came to bookkeeping, he was a lot like his father--he shoved it off to the side. My Aunt Lois never married and really sacrificed a lot. I take my hat off to her; she was a wonderful person.

Really, I've covered about everything except for one or two items of interest. I'll read to you a quote: "This is to certify that Albin Griffith is an approved preacher of the gospel in the Church of the United Brethren of Christ as long as his conduct and doctrine are compatible with the gospel of Christ, subject to renewal annually, given in a quarterly conference held in Jasper County, in the State of Illinois, the 30th day of November in the year of our Lord 1878." And there is another very similar to this that is dated October of the year 1885.

Then there is one that is just a beauty. This is just a treasure to me! I'll read it and then explain. "In Loveland, Colorado, November 15, 1902, we, the undersigned, hereby agree to take one-sixth or one-eighth interest in Griffith's place in Estes Park, being the forty acres agreed upon by Messrs. Galligan, Skelly, and Beckfield, price to be \$750.00 with the understanding that the said group shall make good and sufficient warranty deed and furnish abstract. Said group also agrees to give right-of-way of road across his ground leading to said forty acres on the west side and also agrees to give right-of-way for a waterworks, payable one-fourth when papers are made out and signed and the balance within thirty days or as may be satisfactory to Mr. Griffith." This is signed by O. D. Shields, C. H. Bond, A. J. Galligan, L.H. Skelly, and W. L. Decktiel--I believe that's the way it is.

Now, gang, this forty acres that they are talking about can be placed if you go out to Everitt Lumber Yard where there is a wooden fence that goes due south. This forty acres goes from there east, and at the time they were buying it for the purpose of establishing the Estes Park townsite. The price of \$750.00 figures out to be about \$18.75 an acre. He considered at the time that he had really made a good deal on it, but because of circumstances, a lot of his property was disposed of just simply to keep going. The family still owns the property where the Everitt Lumber Yard is. There are about fourteen or fifteen acres there. Then, my cousin Esther has some adjacent to that, and her brother Charles and the younger brother Tim have got some land over where Glacier Lodge is, the boundary being common. So the family does have a little bit of the property that is left. Be that as it may, that's the way it is.

I'd just like you folks to know that I had the greatest mother and dad that anybody could have. They couldn't have been any better. I feel that I was born at the right time and certainly in a rather select place. There were boundless opportunities in this environment that just simply no longer exist. I certainly had the freedom of some early years. I was able to walk around, to fish, to hunt, and to go to the wild areas. I think to awaken mentally to the great gifts of nature has helped me learn to work and to assume quite a bit of responsibility. How else could anybody be involved with such a multitude of things, learning about trees, rocks, horses, steam power, sawmills, cars, trucks, business, the building trades--you name it! Someway or another it has been a part of me, and I'm grateful that it occurred at the time it did. I just hope I have the opportunity, strength, and wisdom to put some things into writing. So far, I haven't taken the time or haven't been given the time to do it, but I've toyed around with the idea and hopefully not too long in the future I can set myself to the task and put down some things, not particularly of the family but of the surrounding area.

We've got some pictures here. These are prints that I bummed from my mother. They may not be so good, but you're welcome to look at them. Here's a scene of Estes Park about 1888; that's when Dad moved in. The next one is about the time my mother came up here in 1908. Then here is a reminiscence of the sawmill fire that occurred in 1913; this no doubt was shortly after that huge storm we had. And there my grandfather is with a team and wagon with a couple of big old logs on there. I have no date on it, but I would guess about 1920 or a little later. Maybe Esther could give you a little better date on that. This is my dad at the sawmill, dated 1915. This is right back of Everitt Lumber. It is most interesting that I've got a few pictures of the area where the millsite was and of the buildings at Bierstadt Lake. You can see here the burned trees and one of the buildings. I would guess this was 1907.

Voice     Was that right on the lake?

DG        No, you could see the lake from where the millsite was.

Voice     Was it downstream?

DG        No, in fact it was very close to where the water comes into Bierstadt Lake now. I went up there a few years ago and was able to find the old engine that was there, but when I went up two years ago with my kid to show him where it was, it had been taken out. Anyway, here is part of the buildings as they were being constructed at the millsite at Bierstadt Lake. Then, here's a picture I would assume of most of the crew that worked there at Bierstadt. Here's Uncle John, Aunt Virginia, Aunt Oma, Aunt Lois, my dad, and one other fellow whom I recognize, Oscar Green. The rest of them I don't know. Here is my father in 1912 in the Bierstadt region, where the fire was.

- Voice     The lumber business I assume passed into someone else's hands or Everitt's hands?
- DG        When my grandfather died in 1946, he legally owned the lumber yard. His will gave the lumber yard equally to my Aunt Lois and my father. Sometime in 1950-51 my dad bought out her interest. He kept possession of the lumber yard until 1964 when he sold it to a man who called it Beaver's Lumber and who held it only for a year. Then, he in turn sold the lumber company to Everitt. But we do own the ground and the buildings. Everitt has it on a lease basis.
- Voice     I wonder whether you know anything about the history of the log cabin that was known as the third oldest building in Estes Park?
- DG        No.
- Voice     Was it a one-room school?
- DG        I doubt that it's that old myself. One of the pictures being passed around taken in 1908 might give some indication of it. The thing had been extensively remodeled as I remember some years ago so that it doesn't even look as I remember it.
- Voice     How did your grandfather happen to come to Loveland, Colorado?
- DG        I haven't the slightest idea other than by some personal contact-- he had written or read something about the place and how nice it was and that the needed a minister.
- Voice     All that area in there was supposed to be very healthful. Hygiene was named for its health-related properties.
- DG        Dad often said that within weeks after they got to Loveland there was no more sickness.
- Voice     My grandfather was a Methodist minister who came and served at towns in the area for the same reason.

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# INDEX

## A-C

Bear Lake, 8  
 Beaver's Lumber, 19  
 Beckfield, Mr. and Mrs. Wm., 12,17  
 Bierstadt Lake, 7-8,10,18  
 Big Thompson River, 6  
 Brinwood Lodge, 10  
 Cleeve, John, 5  
 Crocker Ranch, 3,5  
 Crosby, Tom, 13

## D-F

Decktiel, W. L., 17  
 Dunraven Cabins, 5  
 Elkhorn Lodge, 5  
 English Hotel, 5-7  
 Everitt Lumber Company, 5,9,11,17-19  
 Fall River, 5  
 Fenton, Esther, 1,3,11,16-17  
 Ferguson Family, 5,10  
 Fire, 12  
 Fires, forest, 8,11,13  
 Fishing, 6-7  
 Food, 11,14

## G

Galligan, A. J., 17  
 Glacier Lodge, 17  
 Green, Oscar, 18  
 Griffith, Albin,  
     Birth, 1  
     Business, 7,9,11,13,17-19  
     Career, 2-4,15-16  
     Children, 1  
     Marriage, 1  
 Griffith, Dan,  
     Birth, 1  
     Business, 6,9,13,19  
     Childhood, 1-2  
     Family, 18  
 Griffith, Don, 13-14,18  
 Griffith, Homestead, 3,17  
 Griffith, John, 1-2,9,16,18  
 Griffith, Louise Jesser, 11-12,18  
 Griffith, Margaret Grim, 1-2,16  
 Griffith, Mary Lois, 1,16-19  
 Griffith, Mike, 1,16  
 Griffith, Nellie, 1,16  
 Griffith, Oma, 1-2,16,18

## H-J

Hidden Valley Road, 13  
 Horses, 4-5,14  
 Housing, 5  
 Hubbell Stage and Freight, 5  
 Hupp Hotel, 5  
 Husted, Shep, 5,11  
 Hygiene, Colo., 19  
 Indians, 4

## K-P

Lamborn, Alfred (Mr. and Mrs.), 12  
 Long's Peak Inn, 5  
 Loveland, Colo., 2-3,19  
 Lumbering, 7-14  
 McGraw Ranch, 5  
 MacGregor Ranch, 5  
 McPherson, Imogene, 11  
 Pole Hill Road, 3

## Q-T

Reed, Mrs. Charlie, Sr., 5  
 Rocky Mountain National Park, 6-7  
 Roseborough, John, 16  
 Ryan, Joe, 13  
 Sandborn, B. D., 8  
 Schools, Estes Park, 16-17,19  
 Service, Sam (store), 11  
 Skelly, L. H., 17  
 Sprague, Abner, 10,13  
 Stanley, F. O., 10  
 Stanley Hotel, 10,12  
 Stead's Hotel, 13  
 Stead's Ranch, 4-5  
 Stiverson, John, 5  
 Trail Ridge Road, 13  
 Transportation, 3,13-14  
 Tunnel Road, 9

## U-Z

Wabash River, 1-2  
 Weather, 5-6,14-15  
 Welcome, Harris, 10  
 Wildlife, 15  
 Wind River, 9  
 Wind River Ranch, 5